

**Youth in the Class
Struggle: A History of
the Young Communist
Movement**

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YOUTH
IN THE
CLASS STRUGGLE



Being a short History of the Young Communist Movement

by Arvid Vretling



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CONTENTS

	Page
THE HISTORY	5
The War	7
The Red Dawn	10
The International Day of Youth	11
The Third International Day of Youth	14
The Aftermath of the War	15
Stuttgart—Berne—Berlin—Moscow	16
The Berlin Conference in 1919	19
THE PROGRAMME OF THE YOUTH INTERNATIONAL	20
ONWARD	23
THE OFFENSIVE OF THE ENEMIES	26
THE UNITED FRONT	29

THE HISTORY.



HERE is a period in the history of the proletarian Youth Movement of which we can feel proud — and that is the period of the four years' Imperialist war.

The outbreak of the Imperialist war in August 1914, was not merely the work of capitalists and imperialists. Alas! that moment also unmasked the leaders of the Second International who proved to be traiters to the international proletariat, betrayers of the most elementary principles of international solidarity, and became nationalists and champions of bourgeois interests. The Second International, the organ of international proletarian unity, was crushed and broken to pieces. In spite of all declamatory congress resolutions against war and in favour of united working class action in the event of war breaking out, the fact was that in August 1914, proletarians began fighting against proletarians, devastating, burning, pillaging and murdering in the name of the fatherland and other grandiloquent phrases. The working class fought for the interests of its oppressors against those of its own brothers. Young and old proletarians were killed in masses on the field of battle. They died for a patriotic lie, and the labour leaders of the different countries were deceived and fettered by the interests of the nation and of capitalism. The World War was a vicious lesson which must awaken the consciousness of the working class and show it another form of fighting — the class struggle.

But in spite of all, through the smoke of battle and the thunder of the guns we could still hear, although feebly, the truth about the war. In spite of all, there existed in the different countries small groups of revolutionary champions who had not sold their souls to nationalism and capitalism. They saw the nameless misery and the distress into which the working class was thrown, they saw the abject treachery of the leaders who had sold the proletariat, they saw the ruins of the one-time Labour International. Everything was in a state of chaos. But it was necessary to open the eyes of the masses, in order that they might understand the terrible catastrophe that had happened; it was necessary once more to create the international proletarian battle-front against the war and that which provoked it — capitalism and imperialism. **It became the task of the organisations of proletarian youth in the different countries to establish a new international organisation stronger than the old.** It was the proletarian youth in the different countries who mercilessly exposed the true character of the war and tried to awaken the masses from the hypnotic spell of the war, to calm their nationalist delirium. These organisations of youth had already in the pre-war period fought unflinchingly against the increasing slackness and opportunism of the Social Democratic Parties. Among these radical members of the Socialist youth organisations there were many famous spokesmen of the international proletariat. **Even in that early period the proletarian youth organisations, according to Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring, were the only hope for the revolutionary rejuvenation of the whole labour movement.**

Tchitcherin, the foreign secretary of Soviet Russia in his *Sketches of the History of the Youth International* has the following to say about the general situation of the labour movement at that time: *At the outbreak of the war the important historical tasks of the youth organisations in the evolutionary process of the new Socialist revolutionary labour movement had developed into maturity.*

Karl Liebknecht, at the beginning of the 20th century, declared that the Socialist youth organisations, who had played an important rôle in the period up to the outbreak of the war, were the only real arm in the fight against militarism. They stood in the very centre of the battle fought by the new revolutionary elements, growing up within the international labour movement against all falsehood and reactionary tendencies in the working class and its organisations. And they also stood in the centre of the process out of which developed new revolutionary tactics and a new conception of the class struggle. During the war the Socialist youth organisations and their International Union played a still greater and much more important part in the political life of the international proletariat. The proletarian youth organisations were the first in the labour movement to oppose the "civil peace" policy of the Social patriotic trade union leaders. In FRANCE and GERMANY, Socialist youth groups took the initiative in starting an energetic **anti-militarist and anti-war campaign**, beginning with an attack upon the Social patriotic falsehood of the "war for defence". But this was not to be left unpunished. The governments did not want to have their true character revealed during the war. With the aid of the Social patriots, the working masses had been induced to believe that the war was being fought for their vital interests and that national independence, democracy, etc., were at stake. All propaganda against the war was therefore suppressed without mercy, and thousands of enthusiastic heroes lost their lives or were sentenced to many years imprisonment for their "crimes", which consisted in fighting against the war and for peace. Governments, however, may murder or throw into prison many brave advocates of real peace, but the idea of world peace and the revolutionary class struggle is immortal. Thus the Revolutionary Proletarian Youth organisations carried on an unremitting propaganda.

THE WAR.

THE war caused a break down of the international relations between the youth organisations. The Inter-

national Youth Congress at *Stuttgart* in 1907, and at *Copenhagen* in 1910 (in connection with the Congress of the Second International) had set up an International Secretariat, but the relations between the organisations were very loose before the war. The world conflict, however, brought about the creation of the **Real** International of Youth. In October, 1914, the youth organisations of the SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES, ITALY, and SWITZERLAND took the initiative in convoking an international Socialist youth congress or, in any case, a conference between the youth organisations of the neutral countries. The war restrictions on travelling acted as a great hindrance to an international conference, but in spite of all this the latter was organised and took place in the spring in 1915.

The organisations of the Socialist Youth were the first to convene an international Congress, the forerunner of *Zimmerwald*. The Congress was held at *Berne* during Easter, 1915. Delegates had arrived from 10 countries in spite of the difficulties attached to a journey in war time. The *Berne* Conference gave expression to international solidarity, centering its discussions on how to organise the future struggle on an international scale and to establish close collaboration with organisations of Socialist Youth all over the world.

This conference had a certain historical significance while the different nations were fighting each other; while cannon, machine guns, rifles and bayonets were killing thousands and hundreds of thousands; while the labour youth gave their lives for the patriotic lie — for the interests of their true enemies, for the rapacious capitalists to whom no sacrifice was too great, just in this period of darkness and desperation, distress and blank despair, the Socialist Youth met in Conference. International solidarity still existed amongst the revolutionary youth, and here the plans were drawn for the fight against war and for peace; here the watchword was given which was to become the signal for the whole working class in the fight against their exploiters. At *Berne*, representatives of the youth movement assembled from

different countries to prepare the only holy war, the war of the oppressed against the oppressors — a war not marked by national boundaries, but by the frontiers of class.

This conference of the Socialist Youth at *Berne* shone out in the darkness like a flaming beacon, and was seen by the workers of all the world. International relations were, to some degree, once more established. With regard to the war and the tasks of the Socialist youth organisations the following resolution was passed:

"The International Socialist Conference of Youth holding session in Berne on April 5th and 6th, attended by delegates from 10 countries, renews the decisions of the International Socialist Conferences of Youth at Stuttgart, Copenhagen, and Basle which appealed to the working youth of all countries to take up the fight against war and militarism."

"The Conference states with deep regret that the Socialist Youth Organisations, like the Socialist Organisations of the adults, did not, in most countries, act according to these decisions at the outbreak of the war."

"The present conflict, even in those cases where the ruling classes and their government pretended to carry on a defensive war, is the result of the imperialist policy of the ruling classes of all capitalist countries directed against the interests of the people. War threatens and even destroys the vital forces of the working classes; it paralyses its organisations; it hampers its ability to act against the international class of exploiters."

"The policy of truce between the classes is a policy whereby the Social Democracy resigns its leadership as a party of proletarian class struggle, and abandons the vital interests and ideals of the proletariat. In consideration of these facts the International Socialist Conference of Youth demands the immediate cessation of the war. It welcomes with delight the attempts of the Party groups in the countries participating in the war, especially the decisions of the International Proletarian Women's Conference, to force the ruling classes, by means of revolutionary action on the part of the proletariat, to declare peace. It considers it the duty of all young comrades of both sexes to support energetically the movement towards peace which is gaining in strength in all belligerent countries. It expects active support of this

action for peace from the youth organisations in the neutral states.

"The Conference vehemently protests against the attempts to place the Socialist Youth Organisations at the service of the bourgeois militarist youth organisations, thus diverting the working youth from their true tasks: Socialist education, the battle against capitalist exploitation and militarism.

"As regards the present war with its horrible consequences, a war which ruthlessly utilises as cannon fodder even the youth hardly out of school, the Conference emphasises the necessity of enlightening the young workers of all countries still more intensively than heretofore on the nature of war and militarism as inevitable secondary effects of the capitalist system. The Conference stresses the need for educating the young workers in the spirit of the international class struggle, and thus closely gathering them around the banner of revolutionary Socialism."

This resolution represented, then, the position of the congress against the war and at the same time was a clear criticism of the policy of the Social Democratic Parties everywhere, not only in the belligerent countries. In addition a whole series of other questions were considered, including the creation of a *Liebknecht Fund* to be used for maintaining the Secretariat then residing in Zurich. And now began a new period in the history of the Youth International, a period of political action and political struggle to revolutionise the Parties which were still reformistic. It was the youth which carried on this struggle successfully and thus prepared the ground for the Zimmerwald Conference and later on for the Communist International.

THE RED DAWN.

THE new Secretariat (of which Comrade Muenzenberg was nominated secretary) was charged with the extensive task of organising the Youth International, making the youth organisations in the various countries prepare for the combat, and furthering the congress resolutions in those countries which were not represented at the Berne Conference. By the autumn of 1915 not less than 19 youth organisations or groups in the various

countries had declared their agreement with the decision of the Berne Conference of the Youth International. In spite of all difficulties the Secretariat succeeded in making it possible for the organisations to enter into relation with each other, and edited a special organ in order to awaken the international consciousness of the working class. The name of this publication was *Die Jugendinternationale* (The International of Youth). In spite of censorship and postal difficulties, eleven numbers of the International of Youth appeared during the war, containing articles by the best writers of the International labour movement, such as Lenin, Trotsky, Radek, Zinoviev, Bronsky, Kollontai, Ballabanova (Russia), Liebknecht, E. Bernstein etc. (Germany), and a great many other well-known comrades from all parts of the world. Incontestably, those issues belong to the most important Socialist documents and are a splendid example of the revolutionary enthusiasm and ardour of the Socialist Youth.

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOUTH.

IN the din of war, of its patriotic and chauvinist propaganda, the Socialist Youth created its international Rallying Day. The first of May which for some twenty or thirty years has been the rallying day of the international proletariat, has a worthy supplement in the International Day of Youth. The first International Day of Youth on the 3rd of October, 1915, was all the more important as it was not only an international movement against the war and for peace, but also a gathering of the revolutionary forces in the different countries. It was the formation of a united front against the Social Patriots and the betrayers of International Socialism who had sold themselves to nationalism and imperialism. It is to the everlasting merit of the Youth International that it raised the Red Banner of international solidarity and called for action to liberate the proletariat at a time of nationalist delirium and patriotic idolatry. The International Day of Youth was celebrated by enormous demonstrations in GERMANY, SWEDEN, DENMARK, SWITZERLAND, HOLLAND, RUMANIA, and PORTUGAL.

The authorities in every country had tried by all means to prevent these demonstrations, especially in the belligerent states. All letters, telegrams, etc., connected with the International Day of Youth, were intercepted by the censor. The International Bureau issued the following manifesto with the call to observe the International Day of Youth:

Comrades!

However horrible the sacrifices of this war, however terrible the armaments for new wars may be, they are not the worst catastrophe. The worst, which strikes our hearts most deeply and painfully, is the failure of large sections of the Socialist Parties in most countries, is the destruction of Socialist ideals in the blood-filled atmosphere of assassination, is the disgraceful misuse of the labour organisations and their press by Social patriotic labour leaders for militarist purposes.

Young Comrades! You were the first to renew common work on an international scale. You must be the first to break completely and definitely with those who dishonour our name and besmirch our flag. We do not want half-measures and compromises. Brave comrades have preceded us and are today paying for their faith to International Revolutionary Socialism in prison. These martyrs should not have offered themselves in vain. Let us follow their example, let us break with everything untrue, with all half-measures!

On September 3rd we will march not only against bourgeois militarism, but also against those who have abandoned our class people, who by entering a ministry, by granting war credit, by holding speeches and writing booklets for the defence of the war, champion or excuse the conflict; who by their passivity bear the greatest responsibility for the imprisonment of Liebknecht and Hoeglund, and have lost the right to call themselves Socialists. Away with them! Let there be nothing in common between us!!

With this appeal and by this first International Day of Youth the Socialist Youth of all countries manifested its will for revolutionary struggle, for international solidarity of the proletariat. It was the storm that rushed through the world, auguring a new era. Enthusiastic, defying all obstacles and punishments, even sacrificing their lives, the young proletarians raised the banner of peace, freedom, and revolution. In those days it was a great exploit, even if it is looked upon today as a modest

demonstration. The ice was broken, the will for the struggle was again alive.

In May, 1916, international action was again announced. This time it was a demonstration of sympathy for Liebknecht, Hoeglund, and other comrades who had been sentenced to years of imprisonment because of their revolutionary peace propaganda. The manifestation took place in most countries though it was rendered rather difficult in the belligerent ones. At all meetings resolutions of protest were passed against these arrests and sentences, which were justly considered as infamous class sentences. The resolutions demanded revocation of the sentences and immediate liberation. Failing this, the Bureau of the Youth International was charged with the task of entering into relation with the trade union organisations and the Socialist Parties in all countries, to discuss further action on behalf of these comrades.

In Berlin 55 000 workers participated in this demonstration; in Stockholm 20 000; and in the other countries as well the number of demonstrators was considerable. These demonstrations of the Socialist Youth International were, however, surpassed in strength and the number of participants on the Second International Day of Youth, September 3rd, 1916, a demonstration directed especially against the criminal policy of the Social patriots.

Thus, the appeal issued by the International Bureau states:

"Considering the fact that even the Paris Congress of the International, in 1900, instructed the Social Democracy to organise the proletarian youth, particularly for the purpose of fighting against militarism, and considering, further, the Liebknecht resolution at the Copenhagen Conference of the International of Youth, in 1910, which declared that an independent proletarian youth movement was one of the best instruments in the Socialist struggle against militarism, the Berne Conference of the Socialist Youth International decides to instruct the International Secretariat of the Youth to take the necessary measures to organise in the different countries of the Socialist Youth Organisations if possible, with the

cooperation of the Socialist Parties and the international trade unions an international anti-militarist Day of Youth."

The Second International Day of Youth was a great day for the Socialist Youth International and for those of the working class who gathered under its banner. That the enthusiasm and fighting spirit shown by the courageous and self-sacrificing group were feared by the authorities is evident by the arrest and persecutions of our comrades.

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOUTH.

THIS took place on September 2nd, 1917, and was preceded by an International Week of Propaganda, which in many cases, strengthened the different youth organisations. **Against war, against militarism and for a Socialist peace** — such was the appeal of the Youth Day of 1917. Such, too, was the appeal of the **International Day of Youth of 1918**. Both these youth days were worthy successors of the preceding ones. The International Day of Youth was known to all and celebrated by great masses.

The sacrifices of the Socialist Youth International in the struggle during the war are numberless. Nothing less could have been expected from the revolutionary fight of the Socialist Youth. Young comrades had to pay for their „criminal“ propaganda against war and for peace with their lives or long terms of imprisonment. These victims of the struggle for revolutionary Socialism will be kept in glorious remembrance for their struggle on behalf of international peace and for the revolution. They did not forsake their duty nor their belief in international Socialism. They gave their lives for us and for our cause.

When the members of the old International Bureau in *Brussels*, many of whom entered the bourgeois governments as ministers during the war, completely betrayed the interests of the proletariat and abandoned the international struggle, when they became nationalists and patriots, the members of the international Socialist youth did not desert their faith. They acted in complete accord with the revolutionary principle of the class struggle.

They were not entrusted with ministerial portfolios, but were sentenced to many years imprisonment and even to death, as, for example, our comrade *Catucci*, the Italian representative in the Bureau.

All these sacrifices have not been in vain. The youth and the revolutionary part of the working class will remember the courageous martyrs. They were the champions of the new International which has begun a real struggle for the interests of the international proletariat. The Fifth International Day of Youth took place on the 7th of September, 1919, with new slogans. The Russian Revolution had been followed by the German Revolution in the autumn of 1918 and a Communist International had been founded in the spring of 1919. A Soviet State of the brave Russian workers and peasants had resisted a world of enemies; the class struggle now took a real revolutionary form even in Western Europe. In the Communist International, leader of the revolutionary struggle, a Socialist Youth International had found a companion.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE WAR.

BUT now, during the revolutionary class war in the different countries, the proletariat had again to lose many of its best comrades. As the greatest loss to the revolutionary Socialist youth we remember first of all **Karl Liebknecht, who lost his life together with Rosa Luxemburg in the German revolutionary battle.** Once more the Social Patriots with the aid of Noske's hangmen had claimed new victims. Two of the foremost fighters in the revolutionary class struggle and two of the greatest leaders of the proletariat.

Thousands of young comrades gave their lives for the cause of their class during those revolutionary times. Just as in August, 1914, the Social Patriots, in the service of the imperialist bourgeoisie once more betrayed the interests of the proletariat. It is a tragic fact that large masses of workers still followed their traitors and de-

ceived their class comrades despite the lessons they had received in the world war.

The International Day of Youth in 1919 could not be celebrated on a large scale in all countries because of organisational difficulties. In most countries, however, large masses attended the demonstrations and meetings. In Berlin, Noske's Black and Tans revealed their true character by firing with machine guns upon 2,000 young demonstrators on their way home. On this Fifth International Day of Youth, the watchword was "**For Soviet Russia; for the Communist International; for the realisation of the proletarian revolution and the proletarian dictatorship in all countries!**"

The Sixth International Day of Youth, on September 6th, 1920, was still more magnificent and impressive than the preceding ones, and also better prepared. In some 20 countries — besides those subordinated to the Moscow Secretariat —, about three million workers hailed the Youth Day. And on the Seventh International Day of Youth, on September 4th, 1921, enormous crowds of demonstrators gathered around the banner of the Youth International.

Thus the seven International Days of Youth have constantly indicated a growing interest in the Communist Youth Movement, an ever increasing number of champions adhering to the programme and watchword of the Young Communist International. The International Day of Youth has become a tradition with which are bound up the great exploits of the revolutionary youth. But still greater exploits are to be achieved. With ever greater enthusiasm and militancy the proletarian youth will gather around the banners of the Young Communist International and the International Day of Youth will some day be celebrated under the aegis of victory and liberation.

STUTTGART—BERNE—BERLIN—MOSCOW.

THE Congresses of *Stuttgart*, *Berne*, *Berlin* and *Moscow* can be considered as milestones in the history and evolution of the proletarian Youth International.

These four cities are connected with four different periods of the history of the Youth International. The Socialist Youth Organisations had been discussed even before the Stuttgart Congress in 1907. In the year 1900 in *Paris*, and in 1904 in *Amsterdam*, attempts had been made to establish international relations between the different Socialist Youth Organisations. These, however, did not succeed. Shortly afterwards, *Karl Liebknecht*, *Ludwig Frank*, and *De Man* endeavoured to create a proletarian youth international. This caused the congress of the South German youth organisation (in September, 1906) to entrust *De Man* officially with the task of forming connections between the Socialist Youth organisations, and convoking a Socialist Youth congress in conjunction with the Socialist Congress at Stuttgart, 1907.

In March, 1907, a provisional International Bureau was founded with *De Man* as its secretary. Thanks to this Bureau a youth congress took place August 24—26th at which representatives from 13 countries assisted. *Karl Liebknecht* was elected president of the Youth International. The Stuttgart Congress took place two years after the defeat of the Russian revolution in 1905, when terrorism was rife in Russia, and when revisionism flourished in the labour movement of Western Europe. But the Russian revolution in 1905 had awakened the working masses, had shown them the necessity of choosing other means for their liberation than those of eternal compromise with their enemies in the bourgeois parliaments. It was necessary to lay particular stress on revolutionary action of the masses, through general strikes and armed rebellions. This could not be done, however, without revolutionary Socialist education, without a militant spirit ready for combat. And those to uphold that spirit could be recruited only from the ranks of the proletarian youth. Hence the calling of the Stuttgart Conference. A primary feature of the proceedings of this Congress, even overshadowing the revolutionary part of the programme, was the educational plan advanced and accepted, emphasising the struggle against alcohol, the

need for physical training and protection of the young workers.

The Socialist Youth International was founded in Stuttgart, but its organisation was rather loose and feeble. The most important result of the Stuttgart Congress was its formulation of a programme for united action, the basis for the activities of the organisations in the different countries.

Between 1907—1914 only one congress of International Youth was convened; this, in connection with the Socialist Congress in Copenhagen, on the 4th of September, 1910. 32 representatives from 9 countries, including guests from Germany, France, Hungary, Serbia, and Rumania, assisted at this International Youth Congress.

Revisionism had won victories in Western Europe and everywhere the youth organisations had to put up a hard battle for their independence. It was therefore a very irresolutely worded resolution that was accepted on the question of the relations between the youth organisation and the party or trade unions. This resolution declares, among other things:

"As it is the task of the youth movement to educate the working youth for the class struggle, it must collaborate constantly with the parties and the trade union organisations."

The Socialist Youth Organisations were thus obliged by this resolution to educate their members for the class struggle, but only in harmony and understanding with the parties and the trade organisations. This resolution was then, indeed, an acknowledgement of revisionism, the sworn enemy of the revolutionary class struggle and any revolutionary youth organisation. This, however, did not prevent the organisations of many countries from making an intensive propaganda against revisionism and for the political and organisational independence of the youth movement.

Another conference between the representatives of the Socialist Youth Organisations took place at Basle in the autumn of 1912. Only a few countries were officially represented. An international youth congress was


scheduled to take place in connection with the Socialist Congress at Vienna in the summer of 1914, but both congresses were prevented by the outbreak of the war. The period 1907—1914 is the first period in the history of the Youth International.

The second period dates from the outbreak of the war in 1914 until 1919 and the Berlin Congress of that year. The Berne Conference and the agitation during the war, with the various youth days have already been described and we will therefore pass over to the third period.

THE BERLIN CONFERENCE IN 1919.

IT was this congress in Berlin that gave the Youth International a firm basis and strong organisation. Originally the congress was to have taken place in Vienna, but this was impossible because of the passport difficulties, etc., as it had been in the previous years 1914—1919. In August, 1919, certain comrades from the different countries came together to nominate a provisional committee which was charged with the preparations for the Berlin Congress. The Congress was opened on the 21st of November with 18 delegates from 14 countries representing 240,000 members. Besides, there were some guests from several countries as well as from the Executive of the Communist International. No account was given of the activity during the period 1910—1915, because the secretary for this period, comrade Danneberg (Vienna) did not attend the conference in spite of repeated invitation. That had also been the case at the Berne Conference. This circumstance was much to be regretted, as the Executive policy of Comrade Danneberg had been much debated and his absence seemed like an attempt to evade responsibility. Comrade Muenzenberg gave an account of the period 1915—1919, and after the discussion of the report a declaration was passed, expressing gratitude and acknowledgment to the Secretariat elected at Berne, for its activity during these years under the most unfavourable conditions.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE YOUTH INTERNATIONAL.

E will give the following *resumé* of the Berlin programme which contained 14 paragraphs:

The first paragraph declares that capitalism, by the accumulation of capital, and an enormous increase in production, has entered on a new phase: imperialism. The colonial policy, the competition between national and capitalist groups must necessarily provoke imperialist wars. The war 1914—1918, a consequence of this development, has brought humanity overwhelming disaster from which there is only one way of escape — through a world Socialist revolution. The path to Socialism leads through the proletarian dictatorship. The next task of the working class of all countries is therefore a determined struggle to crush the economic, and political power of imperialism as well as its ideological influence. A victory is possible only if the working class abandons the reformist and compromising policy of the Second International and rallies around the banner of the Communist International.

The second paragraph discusses the abject misery of the working class youth. Low wages, long working hours, and inhuman treatment are characteristic of the situation of the young workers. This merciless, unrestricted sweating dwarfs the physical and intellectual development of the working youth. Socialist society alone gives the education necessary to develop useful and willing workers. School education, clerical and bourgeois youth associations, and

military service make the young working people incapable of understanding Socialism. The world war has still further deteriorated the conditions of the working youth. This fact compels the young proletarians to enter into the class struggle as an integral part of the working class.

The third paragraph emphasises the necessity of special proletarian youth organisations in view of the social position of the young and the part they play in production, which compels them to defend their own interests. It calls for reorganisation of work, reformation of schools in accordance with the psychological nature of youth, and a formulation of special methods for Socialist and revolutionary education, etc.

In the fourth paragraph it is pointed out that the youth is the most active and the most revolutionary part of the proletariat. The most important task of the Communist Youth Organisations is unceasing political agitation among the working masses towards the end of organising them for political action for the struggle for Communism, for the destruction of capitalist power. The working youth must be educated for the creation of the Communist Society.

In the fifth paragraph is laid down the necessity for the struggle of the youth organisations against all bourgeois parties; against the right Socialists, the professed lackeys of the bourgeoisie (such as Scheidemann, Henderson, Gompers, Vandervelde, Branting etc.); against the Socialist Centre (Kautsky, Macdonald, Robert Grimm, Bauer, etc.) who support capitalist society by their vacillating attitude. The youth must also fight the anarchist ideology directed against the proletarian state as a transition from capitalism to Communism, propagating petty bourgeois ideas and the autonomy of the economic organisation. The same fight must be waged against all youth organisations adhering to the parties mentioned above. In their political struggle the Communist Youth Organisations stand on the basis of the programme of those parties which have joined the Communist International.

After that the programme deals with the struggle against militarism; that is to say, the fight against bourgeois militarism, for the arming of the proletariat and for the Red Army. This is the slogan of the Communist Youth.

The youth organisations must fight for the amelioration of the economic situation of the young workers. This, as also Socialist education and physical training of the working youth, is one of the most important tasks. Furthermore, the conquest of the large masses of the proletarian youth must not be made at the expense of Communist clarity. No special youth organisations for the intellectual class should be created; the intellectual youth must join the proletarian youth organisations as equals and comrades. Finally, in order to bring the proletarian struggle to victory in this revolutionary period, it must be international and therefore the Communist Youth Organisations must unite in the Young Communist International, subordinating themselves to its decisions and resolutions. The Young Communist International stands on the basis of the decisions passed at the First Congress of the Communist International.

ONWARD!

THROUGH this programme, unanimously accepted by the representatives attending the congress, the Young Communist International clearly established its revolutionary character on the basis of the revolutionary class struggle, and broke once and for all with all reformism and opportunism. The Young Communist International thereby proved itself to be the real organisation of the proletarian youth, ready to fight for all the interests of young working people. In its organ, *The International of Youth*, Comrade Muenzenberg wrote as follows regarding the Berlin Congress: —

"The Berlin Congress was a meeting of workers, unknown to one another. But these workers were delegated, charged to represent large and active youth organisations with a quarter of a million members. The Stuttgart Congress saw the foundation of proletarian organisations for the education of the youth; Berlin was the result of the most active revolutionary period, the truest expression of a vigorous movement of the young revolutionary workers."

"In Berlin we gave out the watchword: First Clearness, then a Majority. This, the last appeal to the vacillating and undecided elements, meant the exclusion of all non-revolutionary groups from the Congress. If Stuttgart gave the Socialist educational organisations their programme for the peace period, Berlin has given the programme for the revolutionary period of the proletarian class struggle. The appeal from Berlin will be heard and obeyed by the proletarian youth of all countries. There is only one way that leads the working class youth out from misery, distress,

privation, oppression and slavery, towards light and freedom. There is no shorter path."


With the important decisions reached, the Berlin Congress of the Young Communist International had a solid basis to build upon and now it became necessary to begin with the work of organisation. At the Bureau Session in June, 1920, the first one after the Berlin Congress of 1919, the Youth International already showed increased strength. At this Session plans were made for the Second International Congress. Though it was originally intended to hold this Congress in *Berlin* in the spring of 1921, it was decided to convene it in *Moscow* in connection with the Congresses of the Communist International and the Red International of Labour Unions in the summer of the same year.

The Moscow Congress, the Second Congress of the Young Communist International, was in virtue of its decisions of great importance. Communist Parties had been established in most countries, in many cases thanks to the revolutionary activity of the proletarian youth organisations. The rôle of the latter now changed. The youth organisations had hitherto carried on active political agitation, but this was now superfluous, as the task was taken over by the Communist Parties. This meant that the youth organisations were subordinated to the political direction of the Communist Parties, maintaining, of course, their organisational independence. Thus the youth organisations were given the opportunity of devoting themselves more explicitly to special propaganda among the young workers themselves. The **Theses and Resolutions** adopted for the economic fight of the working youth, for the educational work of the Communist Youth Organisations, for the anti-militarist campaign, their activities among the children and among the youth in the colonies, etc., showed clearly that the Young Communist International and its organisations had begun the struggle for the interests of the proletarian youth.

The Second Congress of the Young Communist International, attended by 135 representatives from 48 different youth organisations from all parts of the world, was

the only existing Youth International and the only spokesman of the international proletarian youth. The decisions arrived at by the Second Congress concerned tasks common to the young workers throughout the world, and a slogan of action put forward is "To the Youth of the Working Masses and their Education for the Proletarian Revolution and Communism!"

THE OFFENSIVE OF THE ENEMIES.

T is obvious that the bourgeois class in every country fears the revolutionary propaganda and that it is trying in every way to discredit and persecute the comrades and organisations which advocate it. In every country persecution follows the Communist movement and its adherents; and the violence of this persecution depends upon the number of workers gathered under its banner.

This campaign against Communism is carried on not only by the capitalist class but even by the Social Democrats and Centrists who in this struggle side with the bourgeoisie. We may add that the class persecution affects only the Communists and does not even touch this moderate and reformist section. This is quite natural. The bourgeoisie considers the Communist movement to be the only one intent upon overthrowing capitalism and bourgeois society, and they understand that it is this section of the labour movement which is preparing the liberation of the working class. Our friends, the Social Democrats and the Centrists, who have manifested concern for the difficulties of bourgeois society, and were kind enough to save capitalism from bankruptcy, always betraying the interests of the working class, are rewarded by lucrative posts in the bourgeois state.

In spite of the infamous crimes committed by the Social Patriots in 1919 at the outbreak of the war when they betrayed international Socialism in favour of national and capitalist interests, great masses of workers are still gathered under the direction of these so-called labour leaders. *Why?* — Because the latter utilise the revolutionary struggle in the different countries, and particularly the Russian Revolution, to make the workers believe that this was incompatible with Socialist ideals, thus rousing their antagonism to revolutionary propaganda. The most harmful way in which the reformists fought the Communists was through the domination of the labour organisations, the trade unions, the cooperative and political organisations. These bodies and their press, as well as the organs of bourgeois society have mercilessly fought every revolutionary manifestation. But it was impossible to fight against evolution. Capitalist society is becoming more disorganised day by day, class contradictions appear more and more acute, misery and distress are continuously on the increase. The old phrases about democracy and reforms are now impotent and not even bourgeois society itself is able to control its economic apparatus. The ruin of capitalism is a natural consequence of the world war. The capitalist system of production can no longer be saved despite all the efforts of labour leaders; for the real character is revealed and nothing can prevent reformist illusions from crumbling.

Within the working class today two opposing tendencies are evident; **reformism and revolutionary class struggle**. Between these two stand the Centrists who do not know which side to join. They are revolutionary in speech but reformist in action, always upholding the reformists in every decisive situation. This breach in the organised forces of the proletariat is much to be regretted, but it is necessary and inevitable. **Unity will be created only on the basis of the revolutionary class struggle.**

The working youth, being a part of the working class, must take part in the fight for their class interests. They, too, have grouped themselves in the three divisions indicated, but here the proportion of forces is quite diffe-

rent, a circumstance which promises much for the success of the future struggle. For the Youth International has always championed the revolutionary tendency within the labour movement. In spite of all falsehood, in spite of all persecution, the Young Communist International has maintained its revolutionary character to this very day, and still holds its position as leader of the international working class youth. The Young Communist International has now more than 750,000 members in fifty different countries and counts, besides, 230,000 sympathisers in the Far East and 10,000 in Italy. These figures represent the really living Youth International. A Social Patriot and Centrist Youth International, founded in 1921 has tried in vain to split this united front of the young proletariat. These bodies are a merely passive organisations each of them having some 100,000 members within their affiliated sections in five or six countries.

The Young Communist International stands unbroken and ready to fight in spite of the attempts to disrupt it.

THE UNITED FRONT.

TODAY when the capitalist offensive is more ruthless than ever, the whole working class must unite to defend its vital interests. Though the efforts of the Communist International to form a united front of the three Internationals were defeated by the reformist and centrist members who refused to collaborate further, the workers belonging to the Centrist or Right Socialist groups are nonetheless determined to create the united front together with the Communists, despite the opposition of their leaders. In this agitation for the united front the youth organisations must actively participate, and the Young Communist International must be the mouthpiece and defender of the cause of the working youth. In the Berlin Conference of the three Executive Committees and in the *Committee of Nine*, nominated by them, the Young Communist International brought forward the demands of the young workers; but as this Committee was broken up by the Second and Second-and-a-Half Internationals nothing was done.

The Social Patriot and Centrist Youth Internationals which in 1921 tried to split the united front of the youth, held a general unity conference in Leipzig in January, 1922. In spite of all their phrases about the united front, the Young Communist International was not invited. During the discussion on the unification of all proletarian youth organisations, nothing was mentioned about the Young Communist International which counts hundreds of thousands of young proletarians within its ranks. The

splitters and disruptionists of yesterday are the apostles of unity today, but they do not want to unify all organisations. Are their attempts at unity meant only to carry on a more effective fight against the Young Communist International? Or do they intend to isolate the majority of the real proletarian youth which adheres to the Young Communist International?

The working youth all over the world will at least understand which of the three Youth Internationals represents their interests. In ever increasing masses the young workers will join the living Youth International, which is the Young Communist International. On the basis of the revolutionary class struggle the proletarian youth will unite in the fight for its interests and for the liberation of the whole proletariat.

The Young Communist Organisations in the different countries are the true proletarian youth organisations and the Young Communist International is the leader of the struggle of the proletarian youth. To follow them means to engage in a ruthless uncompromising struggle and in self sacrifice, but it also means liberation from hunger and misery, from slavery and oppression. It means — **VICTORY.**

CORRESPONDENCE of the YOUNG INTERNATIONAL

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